



# Horizon Technology Finance Corp. (HRZN)

Updated March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 by Nikolaos Sismanis

## Key Metrics

<b>Current Price:</b>	\$13.20	<b>5 Year CAGR Estimate:</b>	7.0%	<b>Market Cap:</b>	\$243M
<b>Fair Value Price:</b>	\$12.50	<b>5 Year Growth Estimate:</b>	0.0%	<b>Ex-Dividend Date:</b>	03/17/2021
<b>% Fair Value:</b>	106%	<b>5 Year Valuation Multiple Estimate:</b>	-1.1%	<b>Dividend Payment Date:</b>	04/16/2021
<b>Dividend Yield:</b>	9.1%	<b>5 Year Price Target</b>	\$12.5	<b>Years Of Dividend Growth:</b>	N/A
<b>Dividend Risk Score:</b>	F	<b>Retirement Suitability Score:</b>	C	<b>Last Dividend Increase:</b>	N/A

## Overview & Current Events

Horizon Technology Finance Corp. is a BDC (Business Development Company) seeking to provide venture capital to small and medium-sized companies in the technology, life sciences, and healthcare-IT sectors, which account for 53%, 43%, and 4% of its portfolio, respectively. The company has been able to generate attractive risk-adjusted returns through directly originated senior secured loans and additional capital appreciation through warrants, featuring a last-twelve-month portfolio yield of 14.6%. The company has exceeded the typical industry average IRR of around 10% from its loan coupons by engaging in commitment fees, guidance fees, and potential equity rights, maximizing its total yield. Horizon Technology has gross investment income of around \$45 million annually and is based in Farmington, Connecticut.

On March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Horizon released its Q4 results for the period ended December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020. The company's total investment income declined by 22.3% YoY to \$10.1 million. This was due to lower interest income on investments resulting from a lower debt investment portfolio, which in turn resulted from the challenging economic and operating investment environment. Its net income per share declined to \$0.21 from \$0.43 in the prior year, reflecting the issuance of shares to fund its portfolio's expansion as well as increased expenses. Horizon's current portfolio remained stable, holding 68 businesses at the end of the year. Amid weaker results, its annual DPS exceeded its net investment income per share during the year. Therefore, the company made use of its reserves in order to sustain its dividend payments. Combined with taking on additional loans to fund its future investment, Horizon's net asset value per share declined from \$11.83 to \$11.02 YoY. Management reassured investors of dividend stability going forward by declaring its three forward monthly dividends at a rate of \$0.10. For the dividend to remain sustainable, management is most likely expecting an IIS/share of more than \$1.20 for FY2021. Hence we expect it at a prudent rate of \$1.25.

## Growth on a Per-Share Basis

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2026
<b>IIS<sup>1</sup></b>	\$1.38	\$1.41	\$1.38	\$1.11	\$1.25	\$1.48	\$1.07	\$1.20	\$1.52	\$1.18	<b>\$1.25</b>	<b>\$1.25</b>
<b>DPS</b>	\$1.63	\$1.35	\$1.38	\$1.38	\$1.38	\$1.38	\$1.20	\$1.20	\$1.20	\$1.20	<b>\$1.20</b>	<b>\$1.20</b>
<b>Shares<sup>2</sup></b>	7.6	8.5	9.6	9.6	11.2	11.5	11.5	11.5	13.5	17.5	<b>20.0</b>	<b>50.0</b>

Horizon's investment results have been quite stable over the years, despite many of its peers in the sector suffering due to the oversupply of cheap financing. Lower market rates have caused BDCs to keep refinancing their loan assets at gradually lower rates, damaging their investment results. However, Horizon's niche operations that require more unusual expertise in industries like biotech have maintained their higher ROIs amid a lack of cheap loans for such risky sectors, including early-stage tech companies. As its successful due diligence record has made possible, the company has managed to maintain quite stable distributions, which are also paid out monthly, providing smooth capital returns to its investors. Horizon's sectors of interest are likely to remain quite high-risk and capital-hungry, which, combined with management signaling towards a robust investment pipeline in a dynamic market, guides us to forecast stable performance in both its investment income per share and distributions in the medium term. While there's a chance DPS

<sup>1</sup> Investment Income per Share

<sup>2</sup> Share count is in millions.

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grows, we chose to remain prudent and forecast no DPS growth over the next five years. The dividend has only declined since 2011 on a per-share basis.

## Valuation Analysis

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	Now	2026
<b>Avg. P/E</b>	11.5	11.0	9.7	13.1	8.4	7.1	9.7	9.4	9.9	9.3	<b>10.6</b>	<b>10.0</b>
<b>Avg. Yld.</b>	11.1%	10.8%	9.9%	9.6%	13.8%	11.8%	10.9%	11.4%	10.2%	10.2%	<b>9.1%</b>	<b>9.6%</b>

Horizon's double-digit dividend yield is the outcome of BDCs being regulated to pay out at least 90% of their profits. In exchange, they are allowed not to pay corporate income tax on these profits before distributing them to shareholders. Still, Horizon's yield is relatively low for the sector, as shares are currently trading at a premium compared to its peers. The stock's extended valuation is likely the result of the company's resilient reinvestment yield, which has remained above 14.5% despite the industry's downward trajectory. As industries like biotech and tech startups are usually free cash flow negative during their early stages, we expect financing in the sector to continue being expensive. Despite that, we believe that a valuation correction towards a P/E of 10 is likely more sustainable in the medium term.

## Safety, Quality, Competitive Advantage, & Recession Resiliency

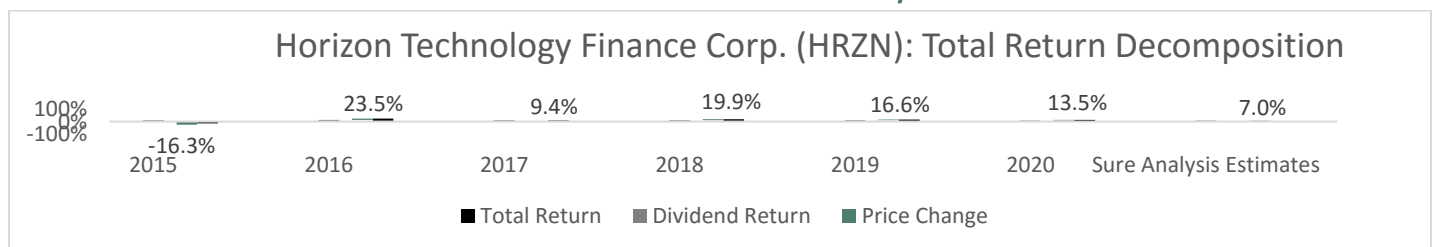
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2026
<b>Payout</b>	118%	96%	100%	124%	110%	93%	112%	100%	79%	102%	96%	<b>96%</b>

Horizon's distributions have remained well-covered over the past few years. As a result we estimate that a dividend cut is unlikely based on its ongoing performance. The company's competitive advantage lies in its team's expertise to identify the most promising companies in risky sectors, which requires professional knowledge and experience beyond finance. So far, this perk has stood solid, as the company's results have outperformed the rest of its peers, many of which were forced to cut their distribution due to increased market pressure. Horizon's stable performance over the years is also visible in its stock price, which is typically less volatile than its BDC peers. With \$174.8 million of investment capacity available, investors and creditors alike are confident for the company's future. Additionally, the company has a healthy debt to equity ratio of around 1.0.

## Final Thoughts & Recommendation

Horizon's type of business model is currently facing increased pressure, as seen by many of its peers. However, the company has been able to leverage its niche expertise in tech and life sciences, demanding a higher return on its investments while enjoying robust cash flows even under the ongoing pandemic. BDCs generally come with bigger risks attached due to their operations' complexity. However, we believe that Horizon is one the highest-quality amongst its competitors. Still, amid a weaker yield and the possibility for a valuation correction, we forecast annualized returns of around 7%. Finally, management's monthly distribution policy is likely to be appreciated by income-oriented investors. We rate shares a hold at current prices.

## Total Return Breakdown by Year



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## Income Statement Metrics

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Revenue</b>	7.32	7.09	20.50	14.97	-1.76	12.40	14.90	21.30	14.78	10.33
<b>SG&amp;A Exp.</b>	3.10	3.48	5.26	3.46	3.24	2.87	3.04	3.41	3.45	3.75
<b>Net Profit</b>	3.99	3.51	15.43	11.86	-4.91	9.59	13.01	19.50	11.00	6.36
<b>Net Margin</b>	54.5%	49.5%	75.3%	79.2%	279.3%	77.3%	87.3%	91.5%	74.4%	61.6%
<b>Free Cash Flow</b>	-36.09	6.50	36.68	-31.33	52.31	-14.84	-12.06	-51.41	-4.02	-25.28
<b>Income Tax</b>	0.23	0.24	0.16	---	-0.09	0.03	0.03	0.24	0.34	0.22

## Balance Sheet Metrics

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Total Assets</b>	239.66	263.74	225.20	280.90	239.25	234.15	266.75	344.00	197.81	407.16
<b>Cash &amp; Equivalents</b>	1.05	25.34	8.42	20.77	37.14	6.59	12.59	6.47	1.30	19.50
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	94.69	127.90	86.95	121.15	100.06	99.07	132.49	159.95	67.93	194.56
<b>Accounts Payable</b>	3.30	3.32	3.32	3.98	3.45	3.46	3.46	4.67	0.00	5.79
<b>Long-Term Debt</b>	89.02	122.34	81.75	114.95	95.60	94.08	126.85	152.05	64.57	185.8
<b>Total Equity</b>	144.97	135.84	138.25	159.75	139.19	135.08	134.26	184.06	129.88	212.60
<b>D/E Ratio</b>	0.61	0.90	0.59	0.72	0.69	0.70	0.94	0.83	0.50	0.87

## Profitability & Per Share Metrics

Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Return on Assets</b>	1.8%	1.4%	6.3%	4.7%	-1.9%	4.1%	5.2%	6.4%	6.8%	1.7%
<b>Return on Equity</b>	2.9%	2.5%	11.3%	8.0%	-3.3%	7.0%	9.7%	12.3%	11.6%	3.2%
<b>ROIC</b>	1.9%	1.4%	6.5%	4.8%	-1.9%	4.1%	5.3%	6.5%	6.9%	1.7%
<b>Shares Out.</b>	8.48	9.58	9.62	11.18	11.54	11.52	11.53	13.48	7.61	17.53
<b>Revenue/Share</b>	0.86	0.74	2.13	1.34	-0.15	1.08	1.29	1.58	1.94	0.59
<b>FCF/Share</b>	-4.26	0.68	3.81	-2.80	4.53	-1.29	-1.05	-3.81	-0.53	-1.44

Note: All figures in millions of U.S. Dollars unless per share or indicated otherwise.

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